Building SAFER Communities

Preventing & Reducing Alcohol Harm

APN, Nov 2025

National Drug Prevention and Education Funding Scheme

Application submitted – Nov 2022

May 2023 - Minister for Public Health, Wellbeing & National Drugs Strategy Hildegarde Naughton announced the successful projects for a new €1.5 million drug prevention and education funding scheme.

Scheme supports Priority 1 arising from the mid-term review of the National Drugs Strategy, Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery

Following a national funding call, 5 projects were successful :

- DASH Mobile Night-Time Economy Project (Cork Sexual Health Centre)
- E-SHIELD UCC (University College Cork)
- Building SAFER Communities through Evidenced Based Environmental Prevention at a Community Level (Alcohol Forum Ireland)
- Know the Score Evaluation (Health Service Executive, Trinity College Dublin)
- Clondalkin Prevention LAB (Clondalkin Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force)

Funding of up to €100,000 a year for three years has been granted to each of the five initiatives providing prevention programmes in school, third-level education, youth work and community-based settings.

12 SAFER Communities (Total Pop. 263,244)

Supported by 7 R/L DATF's

Balbriggan – 24,322

Ballymun – 18,288

Canal Communities – 21,984

Celbridge – 20,601

Cork City – 15,304

Drogheda – 44,135

Leixlip – 16,773

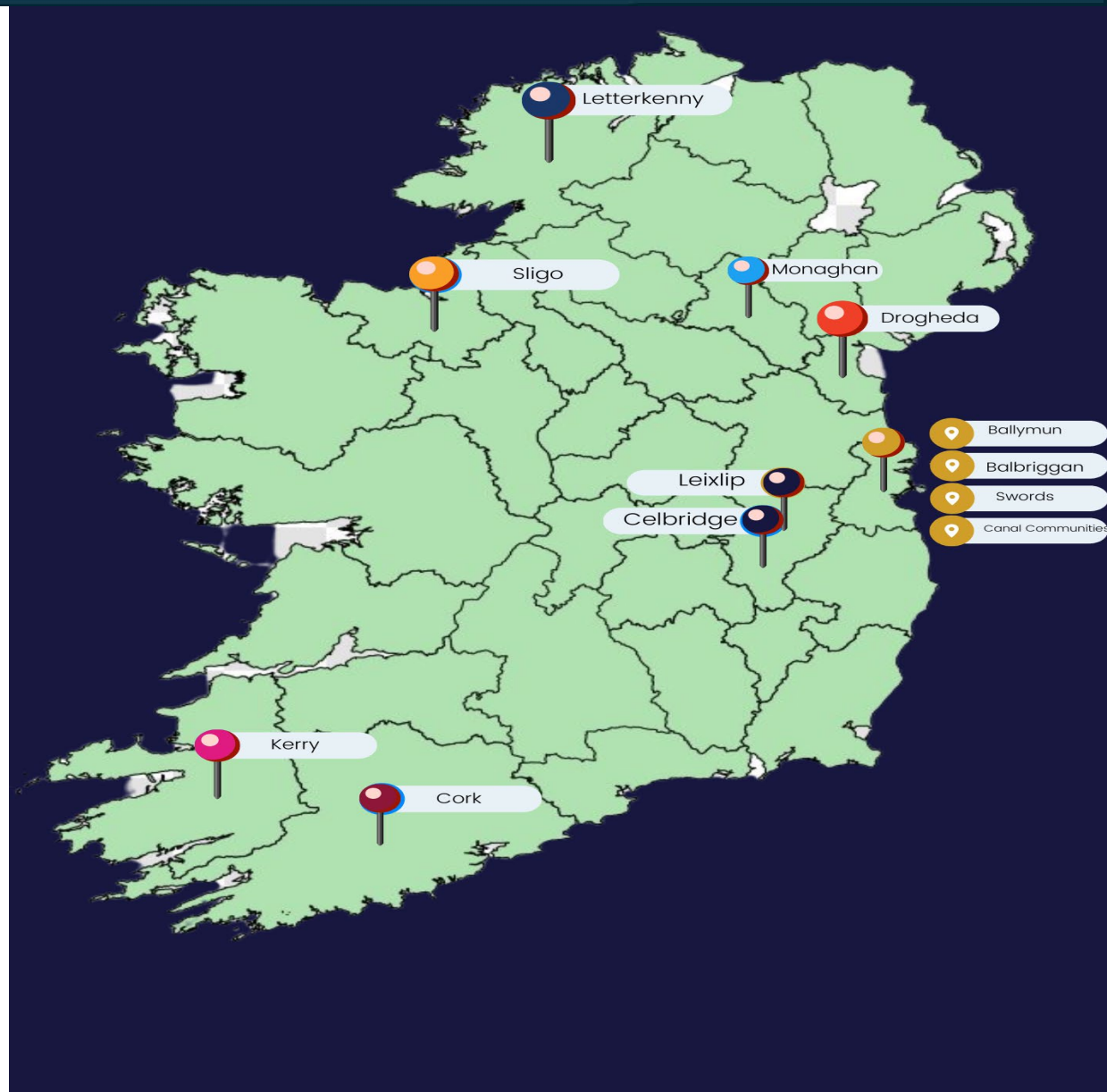
Letterkenny – 22,549

Listowel – 4,797

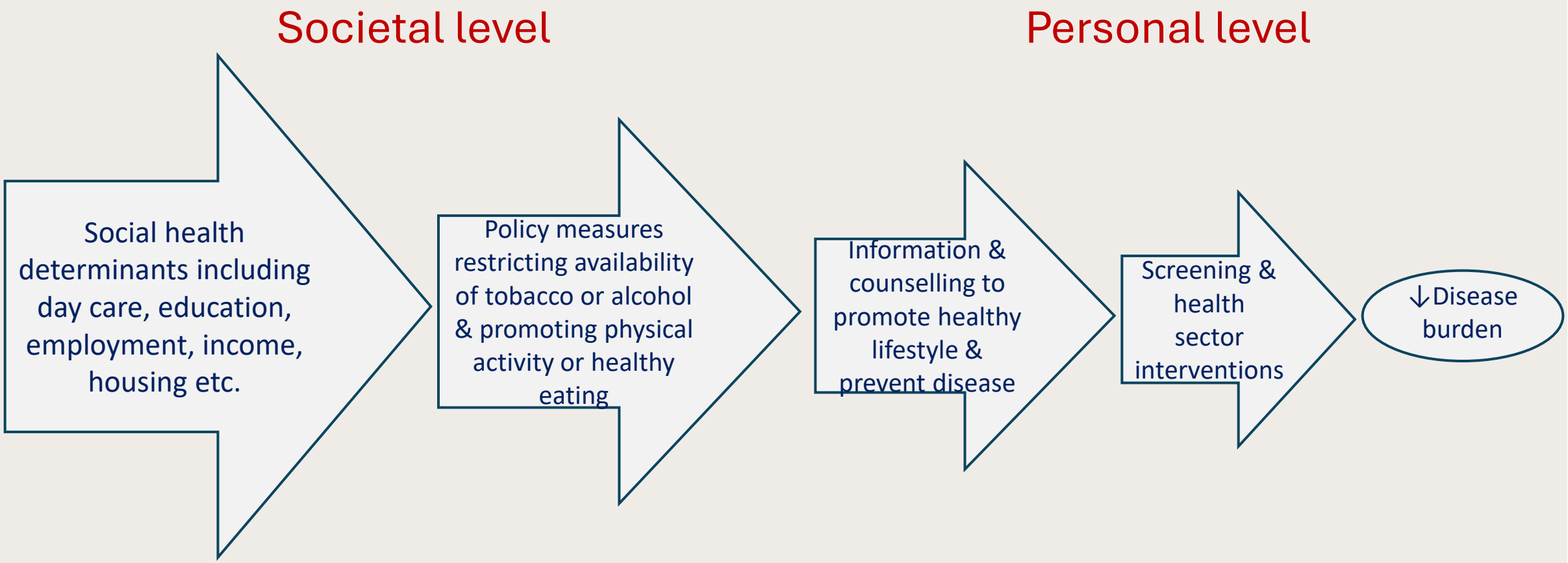
Monaghan – 7,894

Sligo – 20,681

Swords – 45,916



Prevention along the causal chain of determinants and risk factors



Source: Norwegian Institute of Public Health

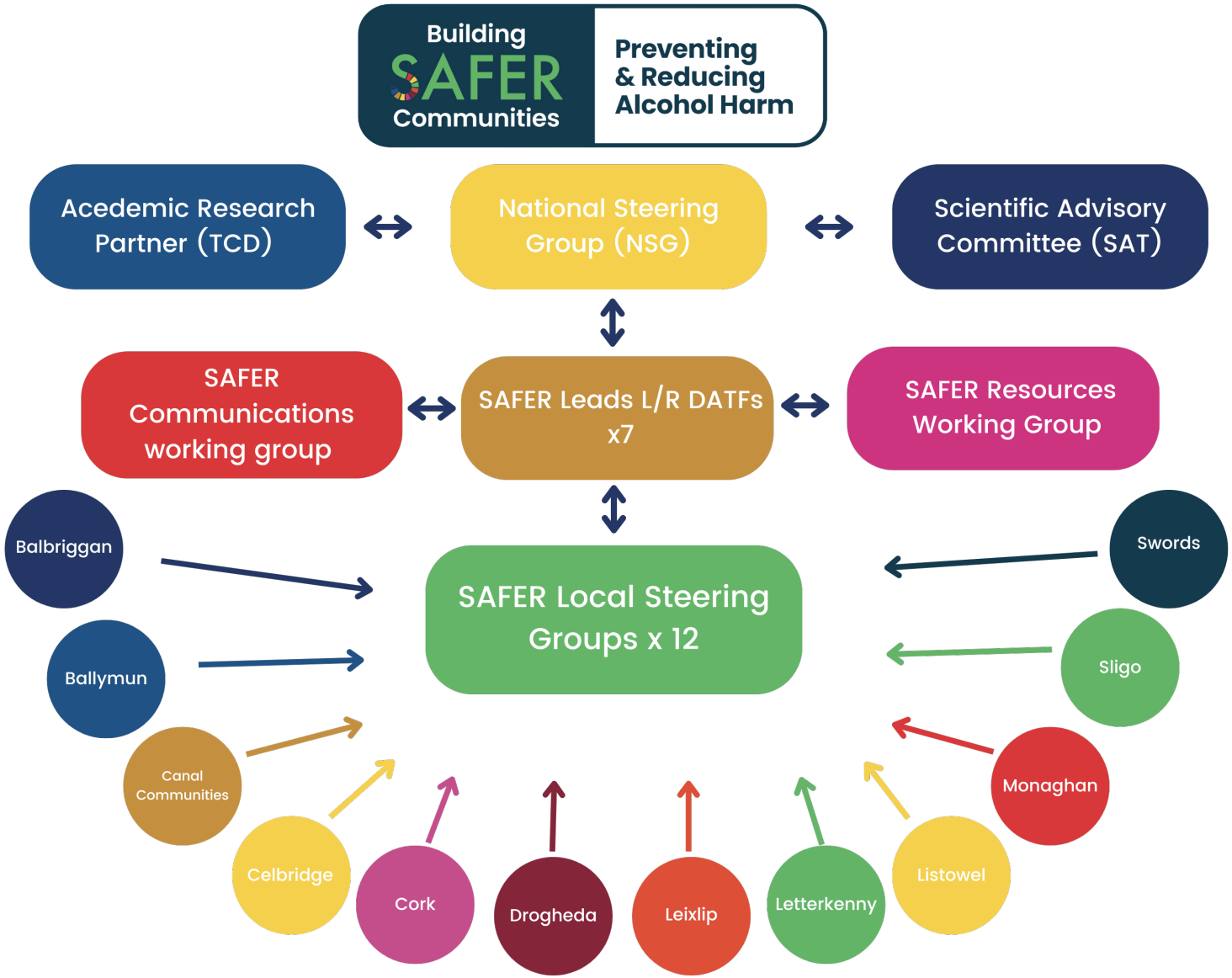
Prevention activities are needed in all parts of the causal chain.
This ambitious project focused on developing, co-creating and testing a standardised model of community action on alcohol modelled on the WHO's SAFER package of high impact alcohol policy measures

To do that –
We recognised early on that we would need to work both from the bottom up and from the top down on

MIND SET – fostering a prevention mind set across all stakeholders

SKILL SET – building understanding of and capacity among all stakeholders to engage with upstream and environmental prevention measures

TOOL SET – providing a range of acceptable, affordable, and effective targeted measures and interventions to support action at the local level


Building SAFER Communities
Preventing & Reducing Alcohol Harm
Acedemic Research Partner (TCD)
National Steering Group (NSG)
Scientific Advisory Committee (SAT)
SAFER Communications working group
SAFER Leads L/R DATFs x7
SAFER Resources Working Group
SAFER Local Steering Groups x 12
Balbriggan
Ballymun
Canal Communities
Celbridge
Cork
Drogheda
Leixlip
Letterkenny
Listowel
Monaghan
Sligo
Swords

Supporting from the national level

Organisation of national events – e.g. Festival of Prevention

Providing resources – website, film, branding, templates

The i-Mark: Building Communities free from Alcohol Industry Influence

Supporting collective campaigns – for example 'Delivery Change on Drink Deliveries'

Development of national training Building SAFER Communities: Using evidence based community action to reduce alcohol harm. A level 7 certificate (10 ECT's) with a University Partner

30,000 euro additional funding just secured to develop a national online SAFER Server of Alcohol module

A workbook for implementation of a range of actions at community level under the 5 SAFER policy areas.

The Challenge of co-creation

The challenge of co-creation – 12 SAFER leads, 12 SAFER steering groups, 1 Scientific advisory committee, 1 evaluation team & 30 years of evidence underpinning SAFER

And a clock ticking on the project time line!

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Sample of action areas

2.1.3 Strengthening Restrictions on Alcohol Availability - Actions

Objective	Action	Lead responsibility	Timeframe
	S1		
Increase Public Understanding of Alcohol-Related Risks & the link to temporal and spatial availability of alcohol and supply to people under 18	**S.1.1** Educational and social media campaigns and campaign plans will be designed which raise awareness of the link between availability and harm across a number of different themes including (but not limited to) • Alcohol and pregnancy • Alcohol and mental health • Alcohol & cancer • Alcohol & Brain health	SAFER lead and resources development group will design and develop resources and campaigns in collaboration with SAFER leads and others including the HSE Local SAFER Steering groups will be responsible for disseminating, promoting and delivering campaigns and campaign materials locally.	Campaign resources developed in 2025, and rolled out across lifetime of the project. European Awareness campaigns each November
	S2		
Increase Agency & Stakeholder Awareness and Engagement	**S.2.1** Training in Alcohol Licensing Law to be delivered with uptake in each of the 12 SAFER sites **S.2.2** Community Guide to Alcohol Licensing Law to be available on SAFER Website, promoted and disseminated across the 12 SAFER sites **S.2.3** Increase level of awareness of Licensing Law in An Garda Siochana **S.2.4** Design and Delivery of SAFER Server of Alcohol e-learning modules across the 12 sites.	National SAFER lead and ATU to lead on the development, promotion & delivery of the training National SAFER lead will lead on the design and development of e-learning SAFER Server of Alcohol Training Promotion of the training to those working in the hospitality and licensed trade across the 12 SAFER sites will be led by the SAFER leads and SAFER steering group chairs.	2025-2027

Evaluating SAFER

Tender awarded to Trinity College Dublin (about 60% of our budget)

Role of Scientific Advisory Committee has been key in steering this process

Baseline survey completed

Evaluation period – to mid 2027

Some concluding thoughts

- Process is completely different to traditional public health approaches – important to build understanding of this.

- Process oriented approach – the process and the time that it takes should be afforded equal importance to the outputs. We need to move beyond short term thinking and funding cycles

- Supporting community leadership is crucially important - building a prevention mindset, providing training, building and maintaining relationships

- The issues and the responses are shaped by the specific histories, cultures and the needs of the local community. Therefore there must be flexibility in how, and when different interventions are shaped and delivered at the community level. One size can not fit all.

- There is no shared / collective space or platform for communities to share learning between countries. Creating a network to share learning, build capacity and skills collective has the potential to build a real and sustainable movement for change.

- When communities get it, they really get it and have huge capacity for achieving change

- Pay attention to the role of hope and joy. It really matters.

A sprinkle of community based counter advertising and campaigning to finish!

ALCOHOL INDUSTRY SECTOR PROFILE

Worldwide, alcohol sales had reached more than $1.5 trillion by 2017. Control of alcoholic beverage production & marketing are concentrated globally in the hands of a small number of firms. Diageo is one of those firms, ranking within the top ten. The oligopoly structure of the alcohol industry helps to generate high profits per dollar invested relative to other industries, which in turn funds marketing expenditures that function as barriers to entry by other firms. Marketing expenditures are high and advertising is widespread. Significant evidence shows that alcohol industry corporate social responsibility campaigns assist in maintaining a policy environment conducive to commercial interests of the industry at the expense of public health.

GUINNESS COMPANY PROFILE

Guinness has been part of Diageo for the last 28 years, a company formed from the merger of Guinness & Grand Metropolitan in 1997. Headquartered in London, Diageo owns more that 200 alcohol brands including Guinness, Johnnie Walker, Baileys, Smirnoff and Captain Morgan. Diageo, is a multi billion trans national corporation which makes its profit from the sale of harmful products. The company reported profits of 4,335,000,000 USD in the year ending June 2024.

ONE MILLION COMMUNITY FUND FOR DUBLIN 8
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as stealth marketing

Alcohol industry CSR activities provide commercial strategic advantage while at the same time appearing to contribute to the public good. In October, Diageo in partnership with the Community Foundation Ireland announced a one million community fund for Dublin 8, offering grants supporting projects in education, community–development, and climate change. A 1 million euro investment represents very good value in terms of the marketing and advertising benefits that will be generated. The money for the fund was raised by the tickets sold for the 'Lovely Days at the Guinness Storehouse' events in Summer 2025, which increased night time footfall to the Storehouse, increased on premises sales of alcohol, and provided considerable positive messaging and marketing for the company; with popular Irish artists, including CMAT and Fontaines DC. It is also important to note, that donations to charities in Ireland have tax benefits for companies and therefore, creative stealth marketing of this type is a very good business decision.
Corporations have used CSR as a marketing strategy for several decades. Research has also documented how CSR has been used by the alcohol industry not only as a form of indirect marketing, but also to frame issues and policy debates and as a policy substitution tactic to delay and replace effective public health policies (Babor et al., 2018; Mialon & McCambridge, 2018; Yoon and Lam, 2013).

THIS PUBLICATION IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH GUINNESS OR DIAGEO.

NOT GOOD FOR YOU
Alcohol & Cancer

It is estimated that 1,000 cancers were caused by alcohol in Ireland in 2020. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has attributed the highest level of causal evidence to the association between alcohol & cancer. IARC classified alcohol consumption as a Group 1 Carcinogen in 1984, meaning there is sufficient evidence for alcohol causing cancer in humans, placing it in same category as tobacco, asbestos and UV radiation. Alcohol causes at least 7 types of cancer, including mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, female breast, liver, and colorectal cancers. Cancer risk begins at low levels and increases substantially the more alcohol is consumed. In the EU in 2017 almost 1 in 7 of all alcohol–attributable cancers were caused by 'light' and 'moderate' drinking. There is a "dose–response" association between alcohol and cancer, in other words the risk of developing cancer increases with the amount of alcohol consumed. Given that cancer risk increases from very low levels of consumption, the commitment of the alcohol industry to pushing 'moderate' and 'responsible' drinking campaigns is harmful.

GET THE FACTS: BE CANCER AWARE

DIAGEO'S OPPOSITION TO CANCER WARNINGS

Faced with undeniable science, Diageo consciously engages in a range of tactics to undermine scientific evidence and create confusion. The Financial Times recently reported a coordinated fightback from the alcohol industry globally as Governments move to introduce cancer warnings. The target is clear: stop clear cancer warnings and keep "moderation" and personal responsibility messaging front and centre, ensuring that consumers blame themselves, rather than the product. Diageo has played a key part of the industry effort to delay Ireland's alcohol–labelling rules (including the cancer warnings) through trade bodies and lobbying.

Here in Ireland, Government adopted health labelling that includes cancer risk as part of the Public Health Alcohol Act (2018). Diageo has worked through a range of alcohol industry representative organisations to oppose, derail and successfully delay this key public health measure.

ALCOHOL INDUSTRY WORKED TOGETHER TO LOBBY AT EU LEVEL

Following an access-to-documents request from the European Consumer Information Organisation, BEUC, the Commission's DG Agri & DG Sante declared that 22 meetings were granted with the spirits, wine & beer industries from May 2020 to December 2023, whereas no meetings took place with civil society. The intense lobbying resulted in parts of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan being diluted, softening the 'no safe level' message.

SPIRITSEUROPE. THE EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE BODY FOR THE SPIRITS INDUSTRY

In May 2023, spiritsEUROPE submitted a formal complaint to the European Commission asking for an investigation into planned Irish labelling rules, claiming that Ireland's draft regulation, including cancer warnings, deviated from EU harmonised rules and posed a disproportionate threat to trade.

DRINKS IRELAND

Diageo Ireland is also a member of Drinks Ireland which lobbied against the introduction of the health warning labels on alcohol sold in Ireland and which played a central role in securing a two year deferral of this national legislation.

One million in stealth marketing is good business for a company that reported profits of 4,335,000,000 USD in the last year

Lovely day for community campaigning

WRITE TO THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION IRELAND TO CALL FOR AN END TO THEIR PARTNERSHIP WITH DIAGEO

SIGN UP TODAY TO ADOPT THE I-MARK: SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES FREE FROM ALCOHOL INDUSTRY INFLUENCE
ALCOHOLFORUM.ORG/I-MARK/

GET INFORMED & INFORM OTHERS: CONSIDER WRITING TO LOCAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN YOUR AREA (LOCAL GOVT. & OIREACHTAS) TO RAISE YOUR CONCERNS

BUILD COMMUNITIES: CANAL COMMUNITIES NEED INCREASED INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES FROM INDEPENDENT SOURCES INCLUDING GOVERNMENT

Accepting funding from the Guinness Community Fund will be a Conflict of Interest for any local organisations in receipt of funding from the HSE.
The HSE has a very clear policy that it does not fund organisations in the community, voluntary or youth work sector who accept funding from the alcohol or tobacco industries.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

- https://media.diageo.com/diageo-corporate-media/media/c0lak0fy/strategic-report_diageo-ar22.pdf
- https://spirits.eu/about-us/membership
- https://www.drinksindustryireland.ie/spiritseurope-calls-for-investigation-into-the-irish-new-alcoholic-beverages-labelling
- Drinks Ireland welcomes deferral of new labelling requirements - Drinks Ireland
- https://www.ibec.ie/drinksireland/your-association/our-members
- https://www.irishtimes.com/politics/2025/07/23/drinks-ireland-warned-taoiseach-that-alcohol-health-labelling-plans-seen-as-trade-barrier-by-us/
- https://blog.beuc.eu/lobbying-hangover-how-intense-alcohol-industry-pressure-put-commission-labelling-plans-on-the-rockshttps://
- www.diageo.com/pdf-viewer.aspx?gid=307336661&src=%2F%7E%2Fmedia%2FFiles%2FD%2FDiageo-V2%2FDiageo-Corp%2Fpress-release%2F2025%2Ff25-preliminary-results-press-release.pdf/
- Babor, T.F., Robaina, K., 2013. Public health, academic medicine, and the alcohol industry's corporate social responsibility activities. Am. J. Publ. Health 103, 206–214. https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2012.300847
- Melissa Mialon, Jim McCambridge, Alcohol industry corporate social responsibility initiatives and harmful drinking: a systematic review, European Journal of Public Health, Volume 28, Issue 4, August 2018, Pages 664–673, https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky065

'Can you add our name. We won't be taking the money, no matter how badly we need it'